

FAST FACTS

OFFICIAL NAME: Republic of Kenya (English) or Jamhuri ya Kenya (Swahili)

FORM OF GOVERNMENT: Republic

CAPITAL: Nairobi

POPULATION: 45,010,056

OFFICIAL LANGUAGES: Swahili, English

MONEY: Kenyan shilling

AREA: 224,081 square miles (580,367 square kilometers)

MAJOR MOUNTAIN RANGES: Aberdare Range, Mau Escarpment

MAJOR RIVERS: Athi/Galana, Tana

GEOGRAPHY

Even if you've never been to Kenya, chances are you know what it looks like. Kenya's savannah is familiar from movies, TV shows, books and even adverts on the telly. It's the landscape many people imagine when they think of **Africa**.

Kenya is located in East Africa. Its terrain rises from a low coastal plain on the **Indian Ocean** to mountains and plateaus (areas of level high ground) at its centre. Most Kenyans live in the highlands, where **Nairobi**, the capital, sits at an altitude of 1,700 metres.

West of Nairobi the land descends to the **Great Rift Valley**, a 6,400-kilometre tear in the Earth's crust. Within this valley in the deserts of northern Kenya are the green waters of famous **Lake Turkana**.

PEOPLE & CULTURE

In Kenya, **more than 60 languages** are spoken and there are **more than 40 ethnic groups**. Almost everyone there speaks more than one African language.

School is free in Kenya, but many children are too busy to go to classes. They help their families by working the land, tending cattle, cooking, or fetching water. Music and storytelling are important parts of Kenyan culture. For centuries, tribes throughout the country have used songs, stories and poems to pass on their beliefs, history, and customs.

NATURE

Millions of people visit Kenya each year to see its endless savannah and the animals that inhabit it: elephants, **lions**, cheetahs, giraffes, zebras, hippos, rhinos and more. The Kenyan government has set up more than **50 reserves** and parks to protect these animals.

People hoping to spot some amazing African wildlife usually focus on Kenya's lowland savannah. But Kenya's ecosystems also include **deserts, swamps, mountain** and **forests**. Each region has its own mix of plants and animals that are suited to the area's particular conditions. Kenya's highland forests are home to many animals found nowhere else in the world!

GOVERNMENT

Kenya was a **colony of the United Kingdom** from **1920** until **1963**. Since its independence, it has been a republic, with a president, a national assembly, called the Bunge, and a legal system. Each year on **12 December**, the country celebrates its independence day - or **Jamhuri Day** - with parades, dancing, political speeches and feasts!

HISTORY

Kenya's location between the **Indian Ocean** and **Lake Victoria** means that people from all over Africa and the Middle East have travelled and traded across it for centuries. This has created a diverse culture with many ethnic groups and languages. And check this out - scientists think Northern Kenya and Tanzania may have been **the original birthplace of humans!** The bones of one of the earliest human ancestors ever found were discovered in Kenya's Turkana Basin. Slavery is a big part of Kenya's history. During the 1600s and 1700s, many Kenyans were kidnapped and taken as slaves by Arabs, Europeans, and Americans. By the mid-19th century, slavery was outlawed by most countries, but by then, thousands of Kenyans and other East Africans had been taken to countries throughout the world.